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Viewing cable 09QUITO103, BACKGROUND TO CORREA'S ATTACKS ON U.S. COOPERATION

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09QUITO103**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09QUITO103	2009-02-10 23:25	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy Quito

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.eluniverso.com/2011/04/06/1/1355/cable-191162.html>

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0103/01 0412325
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 102325Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0008
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 7949
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 4074
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3372
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ FEB LIMA 3015
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4082
RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC

S E C R E T QUITO 000103

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: TWENTY YEARS
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [SMIG](#) [SNAR](#) [MOPS](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND TO CORREA'S ATTACKS ON U.S. COOPERATION
WITH GOE POLICE: GOE OFFICIALS LINKED TO FARC

REF: QUITO 100

...

id: 191415
date: 2/10/2009 23:25
refid: 09QUITO103
origin: Embassy Quito
classification: SECRET//NOFORN
destination: 09QUITO100
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VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0103/01 0412325
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 102325Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0008
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 7949
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 4074
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3372
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC

----- header ends -----

S E C R E T QUITO 000103

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E.O. 12958: DECL: TWENTY YEARS
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [SMIG](#) [SNAR](#) [MOPS](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)
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REF: QUITO 100

Classified By: Ambassador Heather M. Hodges for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: A PAIS provincial leader and former Under Secretary of Government under Minister Gustavo Larrea, Ignacio Chauvin, turned himself in February 4 to face charges of narco-trafficking. Calling himself a revolutionary, Chauvin admitted to meeting deceased FARC member Raul Reyes. As a result, Larrea's political career is at least on hold, if not torpedoed. Elements within the GOE appear to be trying to block effective prosecution, with key leaders of USG-vetted police units instrumental in the case transferred, the judge removed, and the case likely to be moved away from an effective prosecutor. After initially reacting critically towards Chauvin, President Correa softened his comments on the case during his February 7 radio address. END SUMMARY.

FORMER GOE OFFICIAL IMPLICATED IN TRAFFICKING FARC DRUGS

¶2. (C) Ignacio Chauvin turned himself in to authorities on February 4 to face charges of narco-trafficking and misuse of government funds. He had been the head of President Correa's Proud and Sovereign Fatherland (PAIS) political movement in Pichincha province and Under Secretary of Government and Police while Gustavo Larrea was the Minister of Government. On January 29, an arrest warrant was issued by a court in Guayas province alleging that Chauvin negotiated contracts for the GOE, including petroleum deals, with the brothers Jefferson, Edison and Miguel Ostaiza, currently under investigation for trafficking Revolutionary Armed Forces of

Colombia (FARC) drugs to the U.S. and Mexico and for money-laundering. The Special Police Investigative Unit (UIES) realized an operation, "Border Hurricane", on September 18, 2008, resulting in the seizure of 4.8 tons of cocaine allegedly owned by the Ostaiza brothers. Chauvin was a fugitive for seven days before he turned himself in, evading initial arrest, possibly through senior police collusion.

13. (SBU) Chauvin admitted that he was a personal friend of the Ostaiza brothers, but claimed he was unaware of their illicit activity. Chauvin also admitted that he was "a personal friend of Raul Reyes," the second-ranking FARC leader, who was killed in the March 2008 Colombian attack against a FARC camp in Ecuador. Chauvin acknowledged that he met with Reyes seven times, but only to discuss the release of FARC-held hostages. At the entrance to the police station, Chauvin announced to militant spectators that he was a "revolutionary and friend of various revolutionaries around the world." In response, President Correa demanded that Chauvin explain where he met Reyes, that "if the meetings were held in Angostura..., if he (Chauvin) knew that Raul Reyes was in the country and did not denounce it, he would be a traitor to the homeland." Correa also requested that Chauvin declare whether he met Reyes in an official or personal capacity.

14. (C) On February 3, the Guayas Antinarcotics Police (DNA) unit also detained Latin American Association of Human Rights (ALDHU) attorney Diego Benitez, Operational Support Group Police Lieutenant Pablo Cordova, and ex-agent of the Money Laundering Unit Carlos Navarro for alleged collaboration with Jefferson Ostaiza in narco-trafficking. Specifically, the Guayas DNA unit is investigating ALDHU's Benitez for his work at Jooamy Ema, a Ostaiza brothers-owned company. Guayas district attorney Jorge Solorzano asserted that he has sufficient evidence to prosecute both Chauvin and Benitez. He added that, although Benitez' connection to the Correa government was undeclared, he had photos of Benitez with former Minister Larrea, Assembly member Cesar Rodriguez, Vice President Lenin Moreno and President Correa, and that with the photos, "they will not be able to say that they don't know him (Benitez), never saw him, or have never been with him."

CORREA APOLOGIZES TO CHAUVIN

15. (SBU) Softening his tone in his February 7 radio address, President Correa read a letter sent by Chauvin's wife and apologized to Chauvin for his previous comments, saying that "I think that I was unfair. I think that I reacted based on the prestige of the government, more so than on whether Jose Ignacio Chauvin was guilty or innocent." Correa said that in Ecuador everyone was innocent until proven guilty and praised Chauvin's bravery in turning himself in. Correa reiterated, however, that if Chauvin met with Raul Reyes as a representative of the Ecuadorian government in Angostura, he would have betrayed the citizen revolution. Chauvin has since declared that he met Reyes only in Colombia.

ALDHU UNDER INVESTIGATION

16. (SBU) The events have cast general suspicion on ALDHU, where former Minister Larrea and Chauvin had worked, and its use of government funds. Acting Minister of Government Felipe Abril requested that ALDHU provide financial reports to clarify its spending practices. He warned that "if they (ALDHU) used State money for ends other than what had been authorized, it could result in the termination of all written agreements and the dissolution of the entity." Since 1980, ALDHU has received funding from and maintained a close relationship with the central government. In 1996, ALDHU signed an agreement to provide human rights training for the police, but the police's Education Directorate reportedly shows no record of ever receiving training from ALDHU.

17. (C) Our Ecuadorian military contacts have criticized

ALDHU for its work in the northern border region, particularly its issuance of carnets (identity documents) to over 5,000 inhabitants, who are mostly Colombian. A report from the Army's Fourth Division explains that a large percentage of those living near the border are Colombian nationals, but have obtained Ecuadorian national identification documents using the ALDHU carnets, making it more difficult to control the border and the region. The Foreign Ministry issued a bulletin regarding the issuance of credentials clarifying that only the State can recognize foreign citizens as refugees, and that "there is no authorization of any kind that ALDHU or any other NGO could substitute for the authority of the Ecuadorian government, under any circumstance."

REQUEST FOR PAIS TO OPEN ITS BOOKS

18. (SBU) The Christian Democratic Union (UDC) party announced that it is preparing a formal request for PAIS to open its books on the 2006 electoral campaign, alleging that Chauvin's role as the PAIS leader in Pichincha may have involved the Ostaiza brothers and narco-trafficking. UDC President Diego Ordóñez called for the National Electoral Council to investigate PAIS's sources of funding to determine if there were FARC donations.

LARREA IS OUT

19. (C) Amid the controversy regarding Chauvin and ALDHU, Gustavo Larrea renounced his candidacy for the National Assembly on February 2, following a reported request by President Correa to leave the race. Larrea had resigned as Coordinating Minister of Internal and External Security on January 10 to run for the Assembly and was considered by some within PAIS as one of the front runners to become the Assembly president. In his announcement that he was withdrawing his candidacy, Larrea complained that his friendship with Chauvin had been used to damage the image of the government. However, Solorzano stated on February 7 that it was Larrea who "committed his own political suicide by having a close collaborator and intimate friend who has ties to the guerrilla (FARC) and saying that he knew nothing about it."

110. (C) Larrea's falling out with PAIS appears more complicated than when Correa requested Larrea leave his position as Minister of Government in November 2007, only to reappoint him on January 3, 2008 as the Coordinating Minister of Internal and External Security. Accusations by Colombia based on documents recovered from FARC computers that Larrea

had ties to the FARC, Larrea's later admission of meetings with the FARC to discuss the release of hostages, and now the ties to Chauvin have tarnished Larrea's political viability, at least for the foreseeable future.

IMPACT ON USG VETTED UNITS

111. (C) On February 4, Ecuadorian Police Commander General Jaime Hurtado ordered the transfer of three heads and 20 members of police units critical to the success of Ecuador's fight against narco-terrorism. He justified the move as "normal transfer of personnel to allow for the ascension of new generals and colonels," but it appeared to be retribution against those who pursued a case that reflected poorly on the GOE. Hurtado sent the Deputy Director of Antinarcotics, Colonel Juan Carlos Barragan, to lead the provincial police district in El Oro, and the Chief of the Special Police Investigative Unit (UIES), Colonel Manolo Silva, to lead the judicial police in Tungurahua, far from their areas of specialty. Silva and Barragan have led a long-running investigation by the UIES of narco-trafficking rings in Ecuador, including potential ties to the GOE. The unit was vetted by and has maintained excellent operational cooperation with the Embassy in counter-insurgency and counter-drug operations. The UIES was instrumental in the seizures of Simon Trinidad, FARC secretariat member, and Nelson Yaguara, alias Commander Uriel, responsible for the

attack on Colombian military base Teteye. The UIES reportedly has been responsible for 70% of the drug seizures in Ecuador since 1989.

¶12. (C) Hurtado also reassigned General Juan Francisco Sosa, Chief of the Judicial Police (similar to the FBI), to a lower-level posting as district police chief in Quito, blaming him for not capturing Chauvin immediately. Sosa has worked closely with various offices in the Embassy - DEA, DHS/ICE and NAS - to strengthen crime scene evidence gathering and investigations. General Rafael Yopez has been named to replace Sosa, but it is unclear how well he will cooperate with the Embassy and USG initiatives.

¶13. (C) Upon receiving news of the latest reassignments, the Ambassador canceled her meeting with Coordinating Minister of Internal and External Security Miguel Carvajal on February 5, originally scheduled as part of Andean Affairs Director Kevin Whitaker's visit, until events were clarified internally. Carvajal called the Ambassador on February 6 to ask about the suspended assistance to the UIES. The Ambassador explained that the replacement of the vetted leaders of the unit had resulted in suspension of support. Carvajal, who knew the agreement was only verbal, suggested to the Ambassador that these agreements should be formalized in writing, but did not indicate any other immediate concerns. They agreed to meet the week of February 9 to discuss.

¶14. (S/NF) COMMENT: Someone (perhaps Carvajal) is using the Astorga and the DHS/ICE vetted unit issue (reftel) to aggravate Correa, or to distract from the Chauvin/PAIS case. The DHS/ICE vetted unit is now being confused with issues surrounding the UIES vetted unit, who have similarly suspended assistance and requested return of equipment. It is unclear if Carvajal or Correa have a true understanding of which unit is which, or that banning "vetted" units in Ecuador could interrupt Correa's favorite program, a DEA-led judicial communications intercept program. There is strong suspicion in the U.S. Mission that Carvajal and others in the GOE see this as a wedge issue to drive out USG influence from the government. END COMMENT.

WHERE IS THE CHAUVIN CASE?

¶15. (SBU) In addition to the police reassignments, the judge for Chauvin and the Border Hurricane case, Zoila Alvarado, was accused by the attorney of one of the defendants of delaying the case. Another judge in the Guayas judicial district, Oswaldo Sierra, reviewed the complaint and announced on February 9 that Judge Alvarado would no longer hear the case. Meanwhile, Chauvin's attorney filed a request to change the jurisdiction of the case to Esmeraldas, with

the justification that the drugs were seized in Esmeraldas, not Guayas. If Oswaldo determines that the case is to be moved, then prosecutor Solorzano will also be taken off the case, further reducing prospects for the involvement of any competent and clean judicial officials.

COMMENT

¶16. (S/NF) The events surrounding the Ostaiza brothers and Operation Hurricane have hit a sensitive nerve for the GOE, suggesting once again that the Correa administration has ties to the FARC. The GOE has been insistent that Colombia recognize that the GOE has no ties to the FARC -- harder to do when an Under Secretary admits to FARC meetings and declares himself as a revolutionary. If the Chauvin and Border Hurricane investigations are allowed to proceed, it is likely additional information will continue to surface and damage the image of the Correa administration. However, the suspicious timing of transferring key leaders of USG-vetted police units, instrumental in counter-narcotics efforts, not only damages our bilateral cooperation, it also lessens the likelihood that narco-traffickers will be brought to justice and convicted. Leftist elements within the GOE may continue to shift the focus or blame on the USG's influence in the security sector, further complicating USG efforts here, or

driving out cooperation altogether.
HODGES

=====CABLE ENDS=====